

822

M422m

Mathews, Charles

Married for

money.

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below. A
charge is made on all overdue
books.

University of Illinois Library

MAY 19 1953

OCT 07 2000

OCT 03 2000

MARRIED FOR MONEY.

COMEDY, IN THREE ACTS.

BY

CHARLES MATHEWS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

Little Toddlekins; Aggravating Sam; Two in the Morning,
Dowager; My Wife's Mother; His Excellency; Adventures of
a Love Letter; Paul Pry Married and Settled; Who Killed Cock
Robin; Humphicked Lover; Black Domino; Ringdoves; Truth;
Why did you Die; Patter v. Clatter; My Awful Dad; &c. &c.

NEW YORK

T. H. FRENCH

SUCCESSOR TO SAMUEL FRENCH & SON

PUBLISHER

28 WEST 23D STREET

LONDON

SAMUEL FRENCH

PUBLISHER

89 STRAND

TORONTO:

R. BUTLAND PUBLISHED

*Produced at Drury Lane, October 10th, 1856. Altered from
the "Wealthy Widow," by John Poole, which wa
produced at Drury Lane Theatre, October 29th, 1827.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Mr. Mopus ...	...	...	...	MR. CHARLES MATHEWS
Bob Royland	...	...	...	MR. ROBERT ROXBY
Sir Robert Mellowboy	...	...	...	MR. A. YOUNGE
John...	...	...	...	MR. TEMPLETON
Mrs. Mopus	...	...	...	MRS. FRANK MATHEWS
Matilda	...	...	...	MISS M. OLIVER
Simpkins	...	...	...	MISS MASON.

MARRIED FOR MONEY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Room at MOPUS'. Miniature on table, R. A knock.*

Enter JOHN, C. D. L., shewing on BOB.

BOB. (*giving card to JOHN*) There, give my card to your master. (*comes down, L. ; exit JOHN, R. C.*) Mopus! Mopus! Where are you? Mopus!

Enter MOPUS, C. D. R.

MOPUS. What, Bob? Come to my arms. Who'd have thought of seeing you here?

BOB. But tell me, what are you doing in this great big house? I hope you're not going too fast again?

MOPUS. No, no, Bob; I've had enough of that. Sick of the eternal turmoil of the world, and the awful struggle with the difficulties of life, I determined to put an end to all pecuniary risks, and resolved at length to look out for a rich wife, and now, Bob, I am a reformed man, respectable. I am married.

BOB. And your wife, you rogue? I'll answer for it, she was one of the prettiest girls in England.

MOPUS. Oh, yes! I daresay she was a very pretty girl. But here, you may judge for yourself; here is a picture of her. (*shews a miniature on table, R.*)

BOB. Lovely, indeed! Why, you have married an angel! Ah! you are a happy dog.

MOPUS. Yes, I am a happy—dog.

BOB. But for what reason is she painted in a dress so entirely out of the present fashion?

MOPUS. A mere matter of fancy; but 'tis perfectly correct, though.

BOB. I don't understand you.

MOPUS. Why, the fact is, she sat for this portrait about thirty years ago, just before her first marriage.

BOB. Oh! oh! a widow! Is she rich?

MOPUS. Haven't I told you I have married her? We've just come back from the Isle of Wight, where we've been spending our money moon. She has a fine income. This is her house. It's a nice house, isn't it?

BOB. Splendid!

MOPUS. She has carriages, servants—who are all very civil to me—and a saddle horse for my express use, which

she allows me to ride almost whenever I have a mind to it. You smile, Bob; yet I assure you, notwithstanding the disparity of our ages, we are as happy together as possible.

BOB. As *possible*—I firmly believe. Yet I trust you do nothing to compromise your dignity as a man. You are master in your own house!

MOPUS. In my own house! they should soon find who was master there—but this is my wife's house, you know.

BOB. I see. (*aside*) Poor devil!

MOPUS. And you, Bob, have you made a fortune?

BOB. Not exactly. No, not a fortune; not sufficient for splendour; yet amply so for independence and comfort.

MOPUS. Hang it, why don't you follow my example and look out for some rich old widow?

BOB. I'm much obliged. I'd rather marry a young one.

MOPUS. Of course—of course. Who the deuce doubts you? No one would marry an old woman if he could get a young one; but there are *pros* and *cons*, and, on the whole, upon my life it is not half so bad as you'd imagine.

BOB. No, Mopus, when I *do* sacrifice my liberty it shall be—

MOPUS. Sacrifice your liberty! No, no; in that respect, Bob, I may boast—

BOB. Well, time presses. I must be gone. I *am* going in quest of a rich old widow, and on a matrimonial project too; but 'tis to ask her consent to my marriage with her lovely daughter, who, dependent on her mother's caprice, may come to me perhaps without a shilling. Come and have a chop with me at the Tavistock, and renew our chat over a cool bottle.

MOPUS. Not to-day.

BOB. To-morrow, then?

MOPUS. No, no. Mrs. Mopus is so fond of my company she does not approve of my dining from home.

BOB. Well, then, I'll stop and dine with *you*.

MOPUS. No, no; don't do that. Women, you know, have odd whims; and if there be one thing Mrs. Mopus dislikes more than another it is my bringing home strangers to dinner.

BOB. Strangers, I grant you; but to see an old friend of her husband's she'd be delighted.

MOPUS. She would—she would; but—she must be prepared for it. I never delight her of my own accord. Harkee, Bob, you think me a contemptible fellow, I daresay, and I should be ashamed of myself, if I had not the best of reasons for this. You must know that I am in a cursed scrape. I must keep my wife in good humour, since 'tis she alone can help me out of it.

BOB. Explain.

MOPUS. Why, prior to my marriage I had a sort of acquaintance with——Oh, it's all over now.

BOB. So ! so !

MOPUS. You must have seen her at the Opera (*throwing himself in a dancing attitude*)—a perfect divinity. So unlike Mrs. Mopus. Well, when I married, of course, as a point of propriety, I broke off the connection ; and, wishing to do the thing handsomely, yet not having any money, I—I gave her my promissory note for a tolerably round sum.

BOB. Does your wife know of this ?

MOPUS. Not a syllable. If she did ! Now, though the note has been long overdue, the poor dear girl herself would not trouble me about it ; but, unfortunately, as she says she has paid it away, and its present owner vows he'll play Old Harry with me unless I pay it immediately.

BOB. So you reckon on your wife's liberality for the supplies ?

MOPUS. Exactly so.

BOB. Well, I wish you success, but you have not told me who the lady was that you married ?

MOPUS. Haven't I ? Mrs. Nugget, the widow of the rich railway contractor.

BOB. Mrs. Nugget ! whose daughter Matilda was placed under the care of an aunt at Bath ?

MOPUS. The same.

BOB. My dear fellow, this is the luckiest thing imaginable ! 'Tis the very lady I was in search of.

MOPUS. You are acquainted with Matilda, then ?

BOB. She is the object of my affections. 'Twas at the house of her late aunt I first beheld her. The poor old lady sanctioned my addresses, but, as I was about to quit England for a few months, it was resolved that our attachment should be kept a secret from Matilda's mother till my return.

MOPUS. Your secret has been faithfully preserved.

BOB. But where is Matilda ?

MOPUS. In the house at this moment.

BOB. Has Mrs. Mopus any other views for her settlement ?

MOPUS. To say the truth, my wife does not inform me of all her projects ; but in this case I may safely venture to answer No.

BOB. Do you foresee any objection to my pretensions ?

MOPUS. None ; on the contrary, to a man who still aspires to admiration, a pretty young daughter is no very desirable companion : so, no doubt, she will be glad to get the girl off her hands.

BOB. You have made me the happiest man alive ; you must instantly introduce me to Mrs. Mopus.

MOPUS. I have now a good excuse for so doing. (*crosses to L.*)

BOB. (R.) You must broach the affair to her.

MOPUS. Directly.

BOB. Above all, you must procure me an immediate interview with Matilda.

MOPUS. Nothing more easy. I say, Bob, one word. My Bessy—her name is Jezebel, but she prefers my calling her Bessy; 'tis more tender—my Bessy is a good old soul at heart, but if this should happen to be one of her nervous days, on which occasion she is rather irritable, poor thing, you won't mind if—

BOB. Oh! if you think she'll receive me coldly—

MOPUS. Not at all, not at all! Bless you, after two or three visits, you will be as much at home in my wife's house—as I am myself. (*a violent ringing of bells, R. and L.*)

BOB. What's that?

MOPUS. That!—'tis merely a bell.

BOB. A bell! why it is a regular *peal of bells*.

MOPUS. Confound those lazy servants! John! John!! (*enter JOHN, C.D.L.*) Don't you hear your lady's bell?

JOHN. (*answers negligently*) Yes, sir.

MOPUS. Then why don't you attend to it?

JOHN. 'Tis not for *me* my lady's ringing, sir, but if I'm to be spoken to—(*aside*) I'll not be angry with him, poor fellow, there's a *roast* in pickle for him as it is. (*Exit, D.L.H.*)

MOPUS. Here comes Simpkins; she is one of the prettiest little girls in the world; yet, would you believe it, my wife talks of discharging her.

BOB. (R.) Incredible! Ha! ha! ha!

Enter SIMPKINS, C. D. R.

MOPUS. (C.) Come here, Simpkins, my dear.

SIM. (L.) Hush! You mustn't "my dear" me, **sir**.

MOPUS. Haven't you heard your lady's bell?

SIM. Heard it? Ha! ha! ha! Oh! yes, sir, I've heard it this half-hour, but 'tis *you* she is ringing for.

MOPUS. For me?

SIM. I wish you well through your troubles, sir. How could you do so?

MOPUS. Do what?

SIM. You know my lady gave you leave to go out walking for one hour, and you have been absent two.

MOPUS. Pshaw! pshaw! this matron is jesting, and hang me but I'll punish her for it. (*looks cautiously about and hastily kisses her*)

SIM. For shame, sir! I'll tell my mistress.

MOPUS. No, you won't, you little gipsy, for if you did—

SIM. We should *both* lose our places. (*Exit door, L.*)

MOPUS. This is a mere jest of that saucy girl's. However, I'll just step and see what my wife wants. (*going*)

Enter MRS. MOPUS, door L., with her bonnet on.

MRS. M. (*holding up a watch to him*) Do you see this, sir?

MOPUS. My dear, I——here's a stranger.

MRS. M. (L.) Whom have you brought here?

MOPUS. An old friend—an old schoolfellow. Mr. Royland, Mrs. Mopus.

MRS. M. (*curtseying very formally*) Sir!

BOB. Madam, I take shame to myself for detaining my friend from his more agreeable duties, and——

MRS. M. Sir. (*aside*) Another attempt to renew acquaintance with his former wild associates.

BOB. (*to MOPUS*) Ask her to introduce me to Matilda.

MOPUS. I will; but I must first procure an invitation for yourself. Mrs. Mopus—I——

MRS. M. Mrs. Mopus! and in the presence of a visitor!

MOPUS. Bessy, love, as our friend's—my friend's—stay in town will be of short duration I was saying to him that our—that is your house, my love——

MRS. M. You know, Alfred, my dear, we see so very little company, devoted as we are to the society of each other, your friend would find my—our house but a hum-drum sort of refuge.

MOPUS. Yes, it is rather hum-drum.

MRS. M. I hope, Mr. Royland, you'll do us the favour of calling——to take leave, before you quit town. (*goes up stage*)

BOB. Madam. (*aside*) Now will he allow me to be politely turned out of the house, without seeing my dear Matilda? I'll pay him for this. (*to MRS. MOPUS*) To say the truth, madam, my friend Mopus has been so pressing in his invitation——

MOPUS. (R., *to him*). Don't say that.

BOB. (C.) That although I have another engagement on hand, I cannot resist his earnest solicitation to dine with him to-day.

MOPUS. (*aside*) He'll ruin me! (*crosses to C.*) No, my dear, I didn't exactly say that, I merely said in case——

MRS. M. (*to MOPUS*) Mightily well, sir, and without consulting me. Better at once convert my house into a tavern for the reception of all the town. (*very blandly*) You forget, Alfred, my love, that to-day I expect Sir Robert Mellowboy on business of importance, and we shall be occupied the whole of the afternoon (*goes up to table L.H. and sits*)

MOPUS. True, dear. (to BOB) I quite forgot that. (*aside*) Deuce a word have I heard of it till now.

BOB. So then you will not contrive an interview for me?

MOPUS. My dear fellow, we have chosen an unlucky moment. She's nervous to-day. Wait for me a few moments at the corner of the square. I'll make my escape and join you.

BOB. Well, since it must be so.

MOPUS. You shall see Matilda before the day is past.

BOB. If you disappoint me, I shall act for myself.

MOPUS. Never fear, but leave us together now. I say, just make her a bow.

BOB. Madam, your obedient servant. (*bell rope, R.*)

MRS. M. Very happy, sir, to have seen you. Alfred, love, ring the bell. (MOPUS rings bell; *exit BOB*)

MRS. M. (*L., in good humour again*) And pray, Mr. Mopus, who and what is this Mr. Royland?

MOPUS. (*R.*) As I told you, an old schoolfellow, and a very excellent fellow too. (*aside*) I'll venture to mention the subject to her. (*aloud*) The fact is, love, he has requested my assistance in an affair of—

MRS. M. (*severely*) One word, Mr. Mopus! You know that at our marriage I paid all your debts, no inconsiderable sum; but if you imagine that my purse is to be at the service of any of your former profligate and ruined associates—

MOPUS. You mistake me. No, my sweet, the business is this. Mr. Royland has a little love affair on his hands, and has asked me to assist him—

MRS. M. (*loudly*) Alfred! Has he, indeed? And you have the assurance to tell this to me! You, a married man!

MOPUS. But—

MRS. M. Not another word, sir. (*giving him a long and very severe look*) I desire that you will never bring him into my house again. I shall give strict orders that my doors be closed against him, and the first among my servants who disobeys my commands, shall that instant be discharged from my service. (*goes up a little*)

MOPUS. (*aside*) "My house," "My servants," that's the way she goes on. (*aloud*) But when I tell you that marriage is his object—

MRS. M. (*softening*) There, there, there, say no more about it. I forgive you. (*holds up her hand, which, with evident reluctance, he kisses*)

MOPUS. But is it true, my dear, that you expect Sir Robert Mellowboy in town to-day?

MRS. M. True, my dear? Yes, surely it is true.

MOPUS. For what purpose, love?

MRS. M. For nothing that concerns you, dear. Apropos, go and tell Matilda I desire to see her.

MOPUS. I fly! (*going, R.*)

MRS. M. Alfred! There, there, there! fly indeed! The eagerness with which you seize every opportunity to quit my company——

MOPUS. Why surely, my dear, you cannot suppose——

MRS. M. Ring the bell, Alfred. (*MOPUS rings bell*)

Enter SIMPKINS, D.L.

MOPUS. (*approaching her*) Go, my dear, and tell your young lady——

MRS. M. (*comes between them*) I can deliver my own orders! Go, Mrs. Pert, and tell Miss Matilda I wish to see her. (*MOPUS whispers to SIMPKINS*) Alfred!

SIM. Yes, madam. L-rd! she is as much alarmed about her young husband as if one were going to eat him.

(*Exit door, R.*)

MRS. M. A foolish habit you have, Alfred, of calling all the maids “my dear.”

MOPUS. A habit easily contracted by most young fellows in our days of single blessed—— (*she looks angrily at him*) our bachelor days.

MRS. M. Enough, enough!

Enter MATILDA, with drawing and pencil. D.R.

MAT. You sent for me, mamma?

MRS. M. How often am I to desire you, miss, not to “mamma” me as you do? A great girl like you, who is mistaken by all the world for my sister.

MAT. (*R.*) Well, I won’t again; but don’t be angry. When I call Mr Mopus “papa,” as I sometimes do in jest, he laughs and says——

MOPUS. (*C., aside to her*) Be quiet. I have news for you.

MRS. M. (*L.*) Alfred, what is that whispering about?

MOPUS. Nothing, love. I was merely admiring Matilda’s drawing.

MRS. M. She has no need of your admiration. (*crosses to C. and takes drawing from him*)

MAT. ’Tis a subject I have taken from the tale of “January and May.”

MOPUS. Ha, ha, ha! a capital subject.

(*MRS. MOPUS looks at him angrily*)

MRS. M. And pray, miss, who suggested so ridiculous a subject to you? (*looking suspiciously at MOPUS*)

MAT. Now indeed, mamma, I didn’t mean anything to offend you; for, see, tis just the reverse—’tis the husband who is so much older than—— Bless me, what have I said?

MRS. M. (*tears drawing*) You don't improve in your drawing. This is the worst thing you have ever done. Positively, 'tis not fit to be seen! (*crosses to L.*)

MAT. (*aside to MOPUS*) But what news have you for me?

MOPUS. (*to her*) A certain Robert Royland is in town.

MRS. M. Alfred! (*knock*)

MAT. (*observing MRS. MOPUS and recovering herself*) There! I declare you have brok n the point of my pencil. (*crosses to MRS. MOPUS*) But have you not something to say to me?

MRS. M. I have only to tell you that I expect a visitor at dinner to-day—one whose visit is partly intended to you—and to desire, therefore, that you will be more careful than you commonly are in your dress.

MAT. (*eagerly*) Do you know him, then? (*MOPUS signs silence to her*)

MRS. M. Know him! of course I know him. But of whom are you thinking?

Enter SIMPKINS, C.

SIM. A gentleman will be glad to see you, madam.

MRS. M. Who is it?

SIM. One Sir Robert Mellowboy, ma'am, a very old gentleman.

MRS. M. I didn't inquire the gentleman's age. I'll wait on him. (*looks at MOPUS, who is humming a tune, and says, emphatically*) Tell the gentleman I'll wait on him. Alfred! (*MATILDA up stage; exit SIMPKINS, C.*) Your indifference is evident, sir; here you stand like a statue! If you entertained one grain of affection for me you would exhibit something like jealousy or uneasiness when——

MOPUS. Not I, my love. Though the Grand Turk himself——(*aside*) The murder will out one of these days. (*aloud*) But while you are engaged I'll just take a turn or two about the square, may I, sweet?

MRS. M. No, darling; I can't spare you. You must take a drive with me before dinner. In the meantime there are the butler's accounts for you to examine; do it immediately and I'll give you money to settle them. (*aside*) That will keep him at home while I am engaged with Sir Robert.

Enter SIMPKINS, C.; she goes to window, L.

MOPUS. (*aside*) And there is poor Bob waiting for me in the street

MRS. M. Now, Alfred; go into the library. Do your work like a good boy, and you shall drive me to my milliner's. (*going, L.*)

MOPUS. Charming inducement!

MRS. M. And Matilda, my love, remember what I have said to you. (MOPUS *whispers* MATILDA) Alfred !

(*Exit* MOPUS, C.D., MRS. MOPUS, D. L.)

MAT. No doubt she has been informed that Robert loves me ; he is the visitor she alluded to, and she intends to take me by surprise.

SIM. (*at window, L.*) How very odd !

MAT. What is it, Simpkins ?

SIM. There is a gentleman impatiently walking up and down before the house, looking up at the window and taking out his watch twenty times in a minute.

MAT. Pray, come away from the window, then. 'Tis very improper to stay there. (*aside*) Should it be my dear Robert. (*hums a tune, and unconsciously approaches the window.*) Yes, it's he !

SIM. Yes, miss, it's a *he*, sure enough, and I declare the very *he* who was here a little while ago with my master—I mean my mistress's husband.

MAT. Here with Mr. Mopus ? Then it must be as I suspect ; a good natured plot, contrived by them to surprise me. That accounts for mamma's affected astonishment, and Mr. Mopus's nods and winks. He's coming in ! Oh ! Simpkins, this is the first really happy moment I have experienced since our parting.

SIM. Is it indeed, miss ? Your parting ! Why I did not know you had ever met.

Enter BOB.

BOB. (R.) My dear Matilda !

MAT. (C.) Robert ! After a separation of fifteen long months, we meet again !

BOB. How anxiously have I looked forward to the hour of my return to England. The instant I set foot on shore, I posted to Bath, expecting to still find you there with your aunt. I no sooner received the melancholy intelligence that she was no more, than I proceeded to London. Ah ! my dear Matilda, had she still lived, she, who sanctioned, who fostered our attachment, would have obtained your mother's consent to our union.

MAT. Listen to me, Robert. I have never dared even to mention our acquaintance to mamma.

SIM. Oho, that's it, is it ?

MAT. For though my mamma is very fond of me, and very kind to me, yet she is rather—she's somewhat—well, we won't speak of that. But, fortunately for us, we have a friend at our side, who, I believe, has told her all about it.

BOB. Indeed ! and who may that be ?

MAT. I find you are acquainted with my new papa.

BOB. And a pretty friend to trust to is your new papa. I have been waiting for him, according to his promise, to rejoin me till my patience is fairly exhausted ; and a little while ago when, after much hesitation, he ventured to introduce me to Mrs. Mopus---

MAT. So you *have* seen her then ? and you are the visitor she expects at dinner ?

BOB. She expects at dinner ! May be so ; but I confess I should not have discovered the fact from the form of the invitation.

MAT. Then she has not invited you ?

BOB. Not *pressingly*. Yet it may be as you say. Mopus undertook to intercede for us ; and I am willing to believe that his regard for an old friend has overcome his dread of displeasing his wife, and that, to serve us, he has resolutely asserted the authority of a husband.

SIM. His authority ! Why he dare not say his soul is his own.

BOB. But where is she ?

MAT. She is engaged with a Sir Robert Mellowboy, a gentleman who pretends to have some claims to a considerable portion of my property, respecting which a law suit is now pending. By-the-bye, what sort of person is he, Simpkins ? for I never saw him.

SIM. (L.) Old, miss, very old ; but he seems to be as good tempered, nice an *old* gentleman, as an *old* gentleman can be. He asked me half-a-dozen questions about you, miss ; particularly whether you were handsome.

BOB. What the deuce is that to him ? (*goes R. H. so that MOPUS does not see him on entering*)

SIM. What, indeed ! But somehow I don't imagine he wanted the information as evidence in his suit at law. But once more, sir, about Mr. Mopus—if you have no other reliance than on his influence with my lady—Here he is !

Enter MOPUS, C. D.

MOPUS. (C.) Plague take this two and two make four job ! One might as well be underclerk to a haberdasher.

MAT. (L.) Well now you have been a good little papa indeed !

BOB. (R.) Mopus, you have redeemed yours lf in my opinion ; and for what you have done, I thank you heartily. (*shaking his hand*)

MOPUS. (*looking anxiously about*) Why, my— my dear fellow— This is too bad. You promised to wait for me in the square !

BOB. So I did till I was tired.

MOPUS. But you must not remain—not just now ; if Mrs. Mopus should catch you—*me*, I mean. (to BOB)

MAT. How then ! you have not acquainted mamma with Mr. Royland's addresses to me ?

MOPUS. Hush ! not so loud. (*aside*) If my wife should find him here after her positive orders to the contrary——

Enter JOHN, C. D. R. H.

JOHN. My mistress sent me to inquire whether you were examining the accounts she gave you, sir, but not finding you in the library——

MOPUS. I am ; I am in the library. Go tell her so, there's a good fellow. (*Exit JOHN, L. D.*) Confound her vigilance ! Now Royland, my boy, pray go. There's a good fellow.

BOB. Well, Mr. Mopus, if this be your friendship——

MOPUS. Don't reproach me—you're not married—you can't appreciate the necessity of these delicate little attentions to the wishes of a wife ; besides I must keep her in good humour to day—the promissory note, you know.

MAT. Will you desert us then ?

MOPUS. No, my dear, Royland was my earliest friend, and hang me, but I'll be his father-in-law still. (*a bell rings*) That is for me. Go, Bob, I can't explain just now, but—— (*bell rings*) Coming, love. (*Exit, L. D.*)

SIM. You see, sir, how little you have to expect from him.

BOB. I'll see your mother at once and declare my intentions.

MAT. No, no, you really had better not see her abruptly ! I'll manage another interview with her before the day is past. (*Exit, R.*)

SIM. (*whispers* BOB) And now I'll give you a hint. When you happen to meet Missis again, don't be sparing of your flattery. Tell her she's younger and handsomer than her daughter, what you please, so you but make the dose strong enough.

BOB. Your hint shall not be lost on me.

(*Exeunt BOB, C., and SIMPKINS, R. H. D.*)

Enter SIR ROBERT and MRS. MOPUS, L. D.

MRS. M. And now, Sir Robert, I believe we understand each other.

SIR R. Clearly, ma'am !

MRS. M. You marry Matilda, and settle the property upon her together with ten thousand pounds.

SIR R. I marry Matilda and so forth. But do you think this arrangement will be perfectly agreeable to her ?

MRS. M. As a matter of course !

SIR R. As a "matter of course." Pray what did you say is her age?

MRS. M. Nineteen.

SIR R. Let me see; take nineteen from sixty-one and there remain—ha, I'm not so confident in the "matter of course;" and had rather receive the agreeable declaration from the lips of the young lady herself.

MRS. M. As you please, but I know her well; she is implicitly obedient to my will. Besides what would become of her if this suit should be decided against her? she has nothing else to depend on; for my expenses are so great that I could do nothing for her.

SIR R. Well, I'm afraid the world will call this a foolish piece of business. When you married Mr. Mopus they laughed and said you were old enough to be his——

MRS. M. Sir!

SIR R. I mean, ma'am, they said he was young enough to be——

MRS. M. Pray, Sir Robert——

SIR R. (*confused*) Upon my soul, ma'am, I don't remember what they said. But I know I took your part, and said that you were right, and he was right, (*she endeavours to stop him*) and declared that you were so astonishingly well that few people would take you to be as old as you were. (*aside*) I flatter myself I have recovered from my blunder with admirable dexterity.

MRS. M. You ought to do as I did, Sir Robert; I married for my own happiness, and despised the idle chatter of the world.

SIR R. There, now, ma'am, you are leading me to the point at which I am anxious to arrive. I would look before I leap. I'm standing upon the edge of the precipice, and ere I throw myself over, I should be glad to profit by the experience of those who have already taken the plunge.

MRS. M. (*aside*) What horrible thing is he going to say next?

SIR R. According to the calculations I have made, it appears there is a slight disparity between Miss Matilda's age and mine; now you serve as a case in point, considering that your age and Mr. ——

MRS. M. You have alluded to that before.

SIR R. Well, then, I would judge by comparison—in a word, do you live happily together?

MRS. M. Live happily? Oh, Sir Robert, we are as happy as the days are long.

SIR R. "As the days are long"! At what season of the year, ma'am? for there are December days, and they are plaguily short, you know. And do you think he loves

MRS. M. He adores me.

SIR R. So I'm resolved at a'l hazards.

MRS. M. You'll have no cause to repent. As to the difference in your ages, some people think there is no harm in the preponderance being on the side of the husband.

SIR R. The people who think so, then, will have no cause to be dissatisfied; for they'll find a devilish lumping weight in my scale. But have you mentioned this affair to Mr. Mopus?

MRS. M. (*with indifference*) No!

SIR R. Then how do you know that he'll consent to it?

MRS. M. I never think it necessary to consult him. He is so tenderly attached to me he always confirms—nay, he anticipates, my wishes.

SIR R. Delightful! Now should the intended Lady Melbowboy prove but half so loving, so submissive, so obedient to me——

MRS. M. Doubt it not, she'll make you an excellent wife.

SIR R. Then there is no more to be said. I'll instantly to my lawyer, desire him to transform his declarations, rejoinders, and appeals, into marriage articles, settlements, and——

MRS. M. (*smiling*) Sir Robert, is this your gallantry? Don't you desire to be presented to Matilda before you go? You exhibit but little of the impatience of a lover.

SIR R. My good lady, I'm just turned of sixty-one, and having waited all these years for a wife, I can easily contrive to wait one hour longer. (*a tap at the door heard, L.*) What's that?

MRS. M. 'Tis only my little Alfred.

SIR R. Your little Alfred! I thought Matilda was your only child?

MRS. M. 'Tis Mr. Mopus. That is one of my pet names for him. You may come in, love! Say nothing of this business to him at present. I have my reasons for it. Come in, love!

Enter MOPUS, D.L., comes down, C.

MOPUS. Ah! Sir Robert, you are welcome to London! I'm very glad to see you. (*crosses, C.*)

SIR R. (*L.*) I'm happy to see you, and to find you looking so well.

MOPUS. Am I? Gad! I'm not very well.

MRS. M. Not well, dear? What's the matter?

MOPUS. I want air, exercise! A few days' shooting with you, now, Sir Robert, and two or three other jolly dogs

like ourselves—for I've heard that in your youth you were one of us, old slyboots !

MRS. M. (R.) Alfred !

SIR R. And could be still, Mr. Mopus. I am hale, hearty, and good humoured, and though I am an old fellow, with a touch of the gout, yet, thanks to country air, my hors s, my dogs, and my gun, I'll bet you a namper of claret that if you'll make up a party of a d-zen of your town blades this evening, I'll see the best man among you under the table. (MOPUS shakes hands with him in delight)

MRS. M. Alfred ! Fie ! Sir Robert ! my Alfred has given up all such doings ; he is now a reformed man.

SIR R. (aside) And a repenting one. or that look belies him.

MRS. M. Besides, remember, you dine with me—with us, to-day.

SIR R. True ! Well, we must be content with a chat over a quiet bottle ; you must tell me all the news of the town—what is going on in the world.

MOPUS. (to MRS. MOPUS) You can tell him all the news.

SIR R. No ! No ! You, you. (to MOPUS)

MOPUS. Me ? Hang me if I know, for since my marriage I have scarcely seen a soul. Ha ! ha ! ha ! I might as well have lived under a hen coop.

MRS. M. Alfred !

SIR R. Well, for the present, good folks, I leave you. 'Tis hardly considerate to int rrupt the billing and cooing of a young—I mean a newly-married couple.

MRS. M. (crosses to c.) Pet and I are going to take a drive ; but we shall return soon.

SIR R. Within an hour I'll rejoin you. (looking at them) Twenty-five and fifty—nothing absolutely celestial about that ; but when it shall come to forty-five and and seventy !—well, if I'm to marry I must reflect.

(Exit, D.L.)

MRS. M. A very naughty boy it was.

MOPUS. My dear, I only—

MRS. M. That will do. Now don't answer me, Alfred ; you know I never like to be answered. Have you examined the bills ?

MOPUS. Yes, dear.

MRS. M. There's a good child ! Ring the bell. (bell)

MOPUS. (rings) What have I been ringing for ?

MRS. M. What can it signify ?

MOPUS. Apropos, there is one item which ought to be charged to your private account, considering you have all the amusement to yourself.

MRS. M. And which is that ?

MOPUS. Ha, ha, ha ! Thirty shillings for repairing your broken bells.

MRS. M. Mr. Mopus !

MOPUS. (*aside*) I dare not even attempt to be funny !

Enter JOHN and SIMPKINS, C.

MRS. M. I ordered the cabriolet. Is it at the door ?

JOHN. Yes, ma'am.

(SIMPKINS *puts shawls and parasol on table, R., and exit, D.*)

MOPUS. (*aside*) Now must I go dangling about with her again ; not a woman's liberty or pleasure ! My love, you—you'll find it very cold. Hadn't we better take the clo e carriage ?

MRS. M. Cold, sir, with the thermometer at seventy ? Are you ashamed to be seen in public with me ? (*to JOHN*) Let the head of the cabriolet be thrown back—quite back. (*to MOPUS*) Fetch Nelly.

MOPUS. (*to JOHN*) Fetch Nelly ! don't you hear her ?

JOHN. 'Twas to *you* my lady spoke, sir. (MOPUS *kicks him off, C.*)

MOPUS. (*aside*) If I could but escape to meet my cursed creditor and obtain a little longer delay.

SIMPKINS *brings the dog to Mrs. MOPUS, who points to*

MOPUS. SIMPKINS *puts the dog and shawls in MOPUS's arms.*

MRS. M. What makes you so thoughtful, Alfred ?

MOPUS. Nothing. Where are we going, Be-sy ?

MRS. M. To make some little purchases at my milliner's. I want you to choose a bonnet for me ; you—you must make me a present of it, and insist on paying for it yourself ; you understand ?

MOPUS. Pay for it ? I ?

MRS. M. What can he do with all the money I allow him ? (*aloud*) How much money have you got ?

MOPUS. (*examining his purse*) A half-crown and sixpence, love.

MRS. M. Alfred ! Alfred !—well, I won't scold you now. There, you can take my purse, and give it me again when we return. Ugh ! the heat is insupportable. Simpkins, where's the parasol ? Give it to Mr. Mopus, for poor little Nelly's eyes. (*puts MOPUS's necktie aright ; pulls down the tail of his coat, and makes him walk before her. Both go up stage, and exeunt, C.*)

ACT II.

SCENE. —Same.

Enter SIR ROBERT MELLOWBOY, C. D., puts his hat on table, R. H.

SIR R. (*speaking off*) Very well, very well, I'll wait their return. (*sits*) I shall consider myself fortunate if the fatigue of this moving does not bring on a fit of the gout. 'Twould be rather inconvenient at the moment I am about to throw myself at the feet of my intended! When I told my lawyer that I was come to town to marry a young wife, he laughed outright. There was a special pleader in the room and so did he. I am afraid there must be something unusually ridiculous in what I have undertaken, that could make a special pleader laugh. However, I have gone too far to recede. But the most trying part of the business is to come. The first interview, the courtship, the declaration—I doubt but I shall make but awkward work of it, so long have I been out of practice in affairs of the heart. Ha! here comes a devilish pretty girl; the same I saw this morning; one of the servants, I suppose. Gad! I'll rehearse the scene with her. (*enter SIMPKINS, D. R.*) Come hither, my little Venus.

SIM. Simpkins, if it is the same thing to you, sir.

SIR R. Well, then, Simpkins, you must do me a service.

SIM. (*aside*) Lord, what a good natured funny old gentleman he is.

SIR R. In the first place, Simpkins, you must give me a little piece of information. I know that you housemaids are always in the family secrets, therefore—

SIM. Housemaid! upon my word! I beg you will understand I'm lady's maid! I'm no housemaid, sir!

SIR R. Well, well, my dear, don't be angry. I didn't mean to offend you. But, tell me, is your mistress's heart engaged?

SIM. (*aside*) Oh! a spy set to work by my old mistress. (*aloud*) Why do you ask me, sir? What should housemaids know about hearts?

SIR R. Come, come, I have particular reasons for the inquiry.

SIM. (*aside*) As I suspected. He shall not know the truth from me. (*aloud*) Why then, sir, it is not.

SIR R. (*aside*) So far then I am safe. (*aloud*) What's your age?

SIM. About the same as Miss Matilda's—nineteen.

SIR R. (*aside*) This is the very thing. The sentiments of one young woman of nineteen are pretty much like those of another. So, now, Simpkins, take this (*gives her a sovereign*)

and tell me sincerely what should you think of me for a husband?

SIM. Do you mean to take me at my word, and that I should marry you?

SIR R. B no means, my de r!

SIM. In that case, sir, I think you'd make a very good sort of a husband, and that any woman might be happy with you.

SIR R. I did not give you that sovereign as a bribe to flatter me, you rogue.

SIM. What reason can you have for supposing I flatter you?

SIR R. (*aside*) Sixty-one tolerably cogent reasons. (*aloud*) Now come, here is another sovereign for the truth. Do you really mean that any woman might be happy with me?

SIM. I do, indeed, sir. I mean any *old* woman.

SIR R. (*aside*) Humph! I might as well have let the question rest, for the amendment is a devilish dear one at a sovereign. (*aloud*) But I'm speaking of a *young* woman. You are a sharp, clever wench, and I should like to have your opinion honestly and sincerely. Would it be *very* difficult for a young girl to love an old fellow of sixty?

SIM. An old fellow of sixty? I don't know that it would be *very* difficult, but I think she would find it much easier if you would contrive to split him into two *young* fellows of thirty. Do you wish for another sovereign's worth, sir? Ha, ha, ha!

SIR R. Not at present; you have supplied me with a stock of knowledge which, with tolerable economy, will last me a month.

Enter MRS. MOPUS and MOPUS, c.; he has a bonnet box in his hand, and several parcels in his pocket.

MRS. M. (*speaking as she enters*) I'll not be contradicted, Alfred. I watched you, sir, and you shall never go with me to my milliner's again. (*down, L.C.*)

MOPUS. (*c.*) You are mistaken, my love; 'twas merely admiring her cap.

MRS. M. Ah, Sir Robert, so soon returned? Your impatience is easily to be accounted for. You have seen Matilda?

SIR R. No, madam; I have waited to be presented by you. I'd rather you would prepare the way for me.

MRS. M. Where is Miss Matilda?

SIM. (*R.*) Waiting for me to assist her to dress, ma'am.

MRS. M. Then what were you doing here?

SIM. Ma'am, I only——

MRS. M. Don't answer me! Go to her immediately, and tell her I wish to see her.

MOPUS. What am I to do with all these things, Bessy?

MRS. M. I declare, Alfred, you have no more intelligence than an infant. Why give them to Simpkins, to be sure.

SIM. (to MOPUS) I shall never be able to carry them all at once, sir!

MOPUS. I thought so too, till I was obliged.

(gives her parcels)

MRS. M. Well, Sir Robert, have you seen your attorney?

SIR R. I have, and all the matters are in a fair train for settlement—at least as far as the lawyers can assist me.

MOPUS. (to SIMPKINS) There, go. Tell Matilda the law suit is terminated—that has put her mother in a good humour and I shall at once speak to her in favour of Robert Royland.

(Exit SIMPKINS, R.)

MRS. M. Alfred!

MOPUS. I was telling Simpkins to put those parcels away carefully. (gives purse to MRS. MOPUS) Sir Robert, my wife in the course of our drive informed me of an event which has given me heartfelt satisfaction. I rejoice at it for Matilda's sake.

(crosses to C.)

SIR R. And I thank you, Mr. Mopus, for my own.

MOPUS. Of course, she has warmly expressed her gratitude to you for leaving her in quiet possession of her little property.

SIR R. You are mistaken. I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing the young lady.

MOPUS. No? Then I can tell you, you will see one of the prettiest girls—(MRS. MOPUS looks angrily at him) The very counterpart of my Bessy.

SIR R. (aside) The devil she is!

MOPUS. Just what the rosebud is to the rose. (aside) I must keep her in good humour to-day.

SIR R. (C.) But has Mrs. Mopus told you no more of our arrangements than that?

MRS. M. (R.) No, no, there was no occasion.

MOPUS. Well, love, to the point. I was thinking that since she is now, as it were, independent, we ought to consider about settling her in the world. Don't you agree with me, Sir Robert?

SIR R. Perfectly.

MRS. M. And you've been thinking of that? Upon my word, you are astonishingly clever. It has already been thought of.

MOPUS. That's lucky, for I have carried my paternal consideration so far that I have thought of the very husband for her.

MRS. M. Have you ? *That* point is already decided upon.

MOPUS. Very suddenly then, for it was only this morning—

MRS. M. Pray, Alfred, don't talk so much, you positively distract me. She will shortly be married to Sir Robert.

MOPUS. To Sir Robert ? Pooh ! pooh ! you're joking. Why surely you don't mean to marry Matilda—seriously !

SIR R. *Very* seriously. For, hang me, Mr. Mopus, if I look upon it as a joke.

MOPUS. Well, then, all that I shall say upon the subject is—

MRS. M. And what shall you say ?

MOPUS. Why, my dear—that—in short—I'm very much astonished at it.

SIR R. And to say the truth, so am I.

MOPUS. (*aside*) Poor Royland ! his hopes are at an end. Have you considered the disparity of your ages ?

SIR R. Deeply, but with so enticing an example before me—

MOPUS. True, I never thought of that.

SIR R. Besides, there's no true happiness but in the married state, and I've been thinking so for these last forty years.

Enter JOHN, C. L.

JOHN. Mr. Royland desires to see you, sir.

MOPUS. (*aside*) He comes at a blessed time.

MRS. M. Notwithstanding my objections then—

MOPUS. My love, 'tis no fault of mine if -- (*aside*) I'll go tell him of this cursed arrangement, and put him out of his misery at once, poor fellow. (*aloud*) My dear, he has something to communicate to me in private. I'll just step down to him.

MRS. M. What can he have to say to you, sir, to which I may not be a party ? (*to JOHN*) Request Mr. Royland to walk up.

(*Exit JOHN, C. L.*)

MOPUS. (*aside*) Now here will be a pretty discovery.

SIR R. Royland, did you say ? Whose father died at Barbadoes ?

MOPUS. The same.

SIR R. I knew him well, and shall be glad to make an acquaintance with the son. I've heard him highly spoken of.

MRS. M. You don't know the young men of the present day, Sir Robert. (*crosses to C.*)

SIR R. Ahem ! They're very different from those of *our* time, I daresay.

Enter BOB, C.

BOB. Upon my word, Mopus, you're a pretty fellow at

keeping your appointments—(*comes down, R., and sees Mrs. MOPUS*) Mrs. Mopus!—the devil! (*bows*) Madam—

MRS. M. (*L. C.*) Sir! So Mopus has made an appointment with you?

BOB. (*C., aside*) I've not forgotten Simpkins' advice. (*aloud*) He had, madam, but as I met my enviable friend in your company, I can easily excuse his forgetting me.

MRS. M. Sir! (*curtseys*) He's civil enough.

BOB. The fact is, madam—

MOPUS. (*interrupting him*) Royland, here is a gentleman who is desirous of your acquaintance. Sir Robert Mellow-boy, Mr. Royland.

SIR R. I am happy to shake you by the hand, sir. I knew your good father well. (*crosses to BOB*)

BOB. Sir, I recollect your name now. I've heard him speak of you. I believe you were at school together, about half a century ago.

SIR R. Yes, sir, it was about—as lately as that; but I wish you would employ some other mode of dating events than by half centuries, for you must know that just at this moment I—

BOB. Ten thousand pardons. I assure you I did not intend to speak strictly to a year or two. (*to MOPUS*) Where's Matilda?

MOPUS. Hush!

MRS. M. (*crosses to C.*) Might I inquire, sir, to what we are indebted for the pleasure of seeing you so soon again?

BOB. Has not my friend Mopus informed you, madam? He promised me that—

MOPUS. (*to him*) There's been no opportunity. (*to MRS. MOPUS*) There's been no opportunity. (*to BOB again*) No opportunity.

BOB. (*to MOPUS*) Has she been nervous again? (*aloud*) Why then, madam, I beg you will allow me to speak for myself

MOPUS. You had better let me do it. My friend Royland is preparing to leave town, love, and— (*to BOB*) 'tis the wisest step you can take— (*aloud*) and he desires your permission—to visit us occasionally prior to his departure. That's all.

BOB. All!

MRS. M. (*coldly*) Oh, sir, you do us much honour.

SIR R. And allow me, Mrs. Mopus, as one of the family to join in the invitation.

BOB. One of the family! I did not know he was a relation.

MOPUS. A precious relation you'll find him.

BOB. What is the meaning of all this? (*crosses to C.*) But,

madam, although that I might occasionally be a witness to my friend's—felicity—was the first motive of my visit, the next was, that having known your late sister at Bath, at whose house I sometimes saw Miss Matilda whose lovely features I instantly recognised in those of her amiable mother——

SIR R. (*aside*) I hope with all my heart that's a lie!

MRS. M. Upon my word, sir, you overpower me with your politeness.

BOB. (*aside*) She takes it and I'm safe. (*aloud*) I say, ma'am, that having known——

MRS. M. Pray, sir, say no more. Your having been received by my poor sister is sufficient recommendation. I shall always be delighted to see you.

MOPUS. Always delighted to see you.

MRS. M. (*to MOPUS*) If all your acquaintances were like him indeed.

MOPUS. Bravo, Bob, you're on the right tack—keep it up.

MRS. M. You have seen Matilda then?

BOB. I have had that happiness. (*crosses to MRS. MOPUS*)

MRS. M. (*c.*) You will be delighted to hear that she is about to be married.

BOB. (*R.C.*) Married! (*looks inquiringly at MOPUS*)

MRS. M. To Sir Robert.

BOB. Sir Robert! (*looks at MOPUS, who makes signs to him*) Why, surely, not *this* Sir Robert?

SIR R. Yes, sir, to this undeniable and identical Sir Robert. Why, what the deuce are they all so astonished at?

BOB. Really, the suddenness of this announcement—(*aside to MOPUS*) and you, Mopus, to allow——

MOPUS. My dear fellow, how could I help it?

BOB. Of course, ma'am, the young lady's inclinations have been consulted, and she has consented to——

MRS. M. May I be permitted to remind you that you are touching upon family affairs, Mr. Royland?

MOPUS. Don't touch on family affairs.

BOB. (*aside*) I shall go wild! and Mopus has not the spirit to assist me. (*goes down, R. Door opens, R.*)

MRS. M. See! here comes my daughter. What do you think of her?

SIR R. So well that shall be perfectly satisfied should she think only half so well of me.

Enter MATILDA, followed by SIMPKINS, D.R.

MAT. (*R.C., to SIMPKINS*) Mr. Royland here! Who could have contrived this for us?

MRS. M. (*c.*) Matilda, my love, this gentleman is Sir Robert Mellowboy, whom, notwithstanding our late dissensions, I

desire you will consider as an old friend—a *very* old friend, of the family.

SIR R. (L., to MRS. MOPUS) You need not insist so strongly upon that point; I daresay she has penetration sufficient to discover that for herself.

MRS. M. (*seeing MOPUS whispering to ROYLAND*) Alfred! what are you about?

MOPUS. Nothing, love.

SIR R. (to MATILDA) ~~Miss~~, I—madam, I am as your good mother has truly said—I—now I wonder what is the cause of this sudden fit of timidity?

MRS. M. (to MATILDA) Is the girl bewildered? Have you nothing to reply?

MAT. To what?

SIM. (*aside*) To what he *intended* to say, I suppose.

MRS. M. (*sees MOPUS again whispering to ROYLAND*) Alfred!

MAT. I have been informed of Sir Robert's generous abandonment of his claims, for which he may be assured of my gratitude. (*goes up*)

MRS. M. (MOPUS *again whispers to ROYLAND*) Alfred! I shall send you out of the room. (*a long pause. To MATILDA*) You will henceforth consider him as your *best*, your *warmest* friend; but the abandonment of his claim is not unconditional.

BOB. (*aside to MOPUS*) Could I say but one word to her?

MOPUS. (*aside*) Be quiet! You'll get me sent out of the room in a minute.

SIR R. (to MRS. MOPUS) Leave us together. I daresay I shall be bolder when there is nobody by.

MRS. M. Now, Matilda, I leave you with Sir Robert. He has a communication to make of the deepest importance to you.

MAT. (*aside*) To be tormented about that tiresome lawsuit, when I am so anxious to speak to Robert.

SIM. (*aside*) I suspect there's more *love* than *law* in the business.

MRS. M. (to MATILDA) By-the-bye, here *is* a gentleman who tells me you have met at Bath.

MAT. Yes; Mr. Royland and I—

MRS. M. And do you really perceive a resemblance, Mr. Royland?

BOB. No *sisters* were *ever* more alike. (*aside*) I am in agonies!

MRS. M. Sisters! He! he! he! If you are disengaged to-day, perhaps you will take dinner with us, and renew acquaintance with my *sister*.

BOB. Madam, I shall be delighted.

MOPUS. (*aside*) Bravo ! Bob. You've done more for yourself than I could have done for you.

MRS. M. Now, Mr. Royland !

BOB. Madam. (*gives his arm; aside to MOPUS*) Do put her on her guard, whisper her to reject him at all hazards.

MOPUS. I will ! I will ! (*goes to MATILDA*)

MRS. M. Come, Alfred, come !

MOPUS. I am only just shewing the miniature to Matilda.

MRS. M. Do you hear me, Alfred ? Lead the way to the drawing-room.

MOPUS. Yes, dear, I'll follow you directly.

MRS. M. (*very imperatively*) Lead the way to the drawing-room !

(*Exit MOPUS, MRS. MOPUS and ROYLAND following, D.L.*)

SIM. (*aside*) Now to know what this very important affair is about.

MAT. (*aside*) I am now certain that mamma has been acquainted with it all along, and has merely intended a pleasant surprise for me.

SIR R. (*brings down chairs. MATILDA sits, R.C., SIR ROBERT, R. L. C.*) Ahem ! Now, Miss Matilda, that we are alone—(*sees SIMPKINS*) So, Mrs. Simpkins, you are here, you needn't wait.

SIM. Never mind me, sir, 'tis no trouble.

SIR R. You may go, Simpkins ; your young lady is quite safe under my protection. As you heard your mistress declare I'm a friend of the family.

SIM. (*aside*) Provoking ! (*aloud*) My mistress's words were, "a very old friend," sir—old ; (*aside*) and spite of the saying he'd be none the worse for a new face. (*SIR ROBERT motions her off*) Surely, sir, you are too polite to turn a young lady out of the room ?

SIR R. I am one of the politest men existing. (*rises, offers arm to SIMPKINS, and with much ceremony bows her off, C.*)

MAT. (*suppressing a laugh*) What an extraordinary old gentleman !

SIR R. Hem ! Miss Matilda, the subject of the business which—(*starts*) Confound the gout ! that is an ominous twinge at the outset of a tender declaration.

MAT. (*aside*) What can be the cause of his hesitation in speaking about a mere matter of business ? If he were not old enough to be my grandfather one would fancy he was going to make love to me. (*aloud*) I am sure, sir, I am attributing your hesitation to its true cause when I say that to a generous mind it is always painful to allude to th

obligations it may have conferred. But pray speak, sir. I am prepared to listen to you with attention and respect.

SIR R. (*aside*) Respect! I wish it had been any other word. (*aloud*) Your frankness, Miss Matilda, your evident good sense, have inspired me with confidence; and I will speak to you with candour and sincerity; will you vouchsafe to answer in the same spirit?

MAT. I always do, sir.

SIR R. Your mother said, and she said truly, that the communication I have to make is one of the deepest importance to you; it may affect the happiness of your future life—(*aside, with twinge of gout*)—four or five years of it or so.

MAT. (*aside*) This is a very solemn introduction to the mere business of a lawsuit.

SIR R. To the property bequeathed to you by your late father I have a claim, established by the clearest evidence. I abandon my claim, but upon one condition.

MAT. So mamma apprized me, sir. Explain it.

SIR R. (*aside*) Explain it! ah! now comes the tug; but courage, old Bob Mellowboy, dashing Bob as you were called in your youth. (*aloud*) That condition, Miss Matilda, is—Marriage.

MAT. Marriage!

SIR R. Marriage, but there shall be exercised no tyrannical control over your inclinations. No mother's commands shall be allowed to sway them. No, to any such proceeding I shall object.

MAT. Really, sir, this is so unexpected I—

SIR R. One word more, Miss Matilda. You have promised to answer me with sincerity.

MAT. I have, sir.

SIR R. Could you love?—could you be happy with—?

MAT. (*anxiously*) Whom?

SIR R. One who is at—(*about to kneel unobserved by her*) I must not venture that, for it might not be so easy to get up again—one who (*aside*)—I'll break it to her delicately—by degrees (*aloud*)—one who is in the house at this moment—~~anxious~~ and trembling for a favourable result to his hopes.

MAT. Then, 'tis so. Are you serious, sir? And is this with my mother's consent and approbation?

SIR R. Strictly.

MAT. Then she has known it all along?

SIR R. From the beginning.

MAT. And as I suspected, she planned this happy surprise for me?

SIR R. She did—she did. But do you really, and of your own free will, consent to the proposal?

MAT. Consent to it? Oh, sir, you have rendered me the happiest of women. Oh, Sir Robert, these are tears of joy I shed. (*kisses his hand*) Dear Robert, what happiness will be ours!

SIR R. Dear Robert! (*delighted*)

MAT. And was it you who persuaded my mother to this, sir?

SIR R. I did, lovely Matilda.

MAT. Oh! sir, I shall henceforth love you—as a father.

SIR R. A fa— (*aside*) Well, everything must have a beginning, and this is more, much more, than I was warranted in anticipating. But bless her, I'll not deceive her. I'll tell her fairly all she has to expect, though she reject me on the instant. (*to her*) Have you considered well? Is it no objection that your intended husband is— (*aside*) I needn't ruin my own cause neither. (*aloud*) That he is a few years—several years, older than yourself?

MAT. None, sir; on the contrary. From what I have observed at home I am convinced 'tis proper, 'tis best it should be so.

SIR R. And are you willing to re'inquish the pleasures and gaieties of a town life for a quiet retreat in the country?

MAT. 'Tis what I have always desired.

SIR R. One last question. Now, suppose that your—Robert, suffering now and then under an attack of rheumatism, or gout—such misfortunes will occur—suppose he should be troublesome, peevish, morose?

MAT. By gentle attentions I'll endeavour to soothe his pangs. I will allay the excusable irritation of his temper by good humour.

SIR R. Charming, charming! (*rises and puts chairs back*) Then I may inform Mrs. Mopus that you fully and freely consent to this marriage?

MAT. And you may add joyfully too.

SIR R. Lovely, divine Matilda, you have—I'm in ecstasies—I— (*aside*) I'd best withdraw, or I shall make a fool of myself. Blockhead that I was for doubting my success. Gad! your physiologists have been blundering all this time, and sixty-one is the prime of life after all. (*goes off looking tenderly at MATILDA; checked by a twinge of gout; exit, D. L.*)

MAT. What a strange, comical old gentleman it is! but so kind as he has been in managing this affair with mamma, I ought not to laugh at him. Here comes Robert; how delighted he will be.

Enter MOPUS and BOB, D. L.

MOPUS. But, my dear fellow, what would you have me do?

BOB. You have taught me to expect but little from you.

My dear Matilda, with what impatience have I waited the termination of your conference with that old——

MAT. Speak not unkindly of him, Robert; he's proved himself an excellent friend. Thanks to him, 'tis all settled.

BOB. Settled! Then you have rejected the proposal?

MAT. Rejected it? You know me too well to imagine so. Oh, Robert, when this morning we met in anxiety and doubt, we little expected so sudden, so happy a change in our fortunes.

MOPUS. What *do* you mean?

MAT. I have, as you might have expected, given my full consent, and he is now gone to acquaint mamma with it.

BOB. Then you have consented to marry him?

MAT. Him! Of whom are you speaking?

BOB. Of one whom it would be too ridiculous to call a rival—old—old—old Sir Robert.

MOPUS. Ay, old Sir Robert, whom your mother sent for from the country on purpose to marry you.

MAT. Mercy on me! What have I done? A light breaks in upon me. "Robert!—Country retreat!—Several years older!" Answer me one question: Are you peevish and morose when you are afflicted with the gout?

BOB. I afflicted with the gout! This is mere trifling.

MOPUS. No; but are you, though? (*treads on his toes*) Come, confess.

MAT. There has been some fatal misunderstanding. I thought it was for you he was pleading. I never should have suspected it was for himself; and, under that delusion, I permitted him to acquaint mamma that I (*in tears*) joyfully accede to the proposal.

BOB. Now, Mr. Mopus!

MOPUS. Aye! "Now, Mr. Mopus." I'm to bear the blame of Matilda's mistake.

BOB. Had you but remained and given her the slightest hint——

MOPUS. (*L.*) And so I intended to do. Zounds! is it my fault that my wife would not let me?

BOB. (*C.*) Not let you! If you had the spirit of a mouse——

MOPUS. Mouse! Nonsense! don't talk to me about mice! I wish with all my heart she were your wife; you would hold very different language, I promise you. Mice, indeed!

MAT. What is to be done, Robert? This unhappy error will but increase the difficulties of our situation.

BOB. Had we not relied on the friendship of your good papa, and his pretended influence with Mrs. Mopus——

MOPUS. Now don't be intemperate, take it coolly.

BOB. Coolly ! Confusion !

MOPUS. Here's a man raving at the idea of missing a wife, whilst I am a model of Patience—who have one.

MAT. Now, Mr. Mopus—papa—(*pats his cheek*)—my dear little papa—you know that with a little coaxing you may obtain anything from mamma. Would you see me so cruelly sacrificed?—me, Matilda, your affectionate daughter. Dear little papa ! (*pats his cheek*)

BOB. (*pats his other cheek*) Dear little papa ! Come, Mopus, you are, after all, the properest person to interfere.

MOPUS. Well, I believe I am, Bob.

BOB. For once assert your authority.

MOPUS. 'Gad, I will, Bob.

BOB. Represent to her the folly, the cruelty, of enchain-
ing youth to age, the—

MOPUS. Stop ! that argument would not be very conciliatory. But let me see—(*with firmness*) Rowland, your hand. Matilda, I'll instantly to your mother. I'll rescue you from the misery of this marriage. I'll rescue you, or—as I believe is usual on such occasions—I'll perish in the attempt.

Enter SIMPKINS, D. R.; seeing MOPUS she conceals letter.

MAT. (c.) Well, Simpkins, have you heard of our misfortune?

SIM. (R.) 'Tis all over the house by this time, miss.

BOB. (L.) And you, I suppose, have done as much to assist your young lady as my friend here?

SIM. You have contrived to obtain another interview with Miss Matilda without my assistance, I own ; but I've not been idle for all that.

MOPUS. (L.C., *aside*) Why surely 'tis a letter she is concealing.

MAT. And what have you been doing for us ?

SIM. Studying geography, miss.

BOB. Studying geography?

SIM. I've been picking out the North Road on the map of England, and packing up two trunks ; one for myself, and the other (*curtseying*) for you, miss.

MAT. (*angrily*) Simpkins!

SIM. 'Tis as well to be prepared for the worst, miss.

MOPUS. What have you there ?

SIM. A letter, sir ; but it is not for my mistress, so you need not be jealous ; no one is going to run away with her.

MOPUS. No, and be hanged to it ! But if it be addressed to me give it to me.

SIM. That is the very reason why I must not. 'Twould be as much as my place is worth to give you your letters till she has seen them ; besides, sir, 'tis written with a crowquill, and the seal is a little Cupid.

MOPUS. (*imploringly*) Now give me the letter !

MAT. Give it to him, Simpkins, he's promised to do wonders for us.

SIM. There, then, but don't betray me ! (*gives letter*)

(*Exit SIMPKINS, R.*)

BOB. And now, Mopus, our fate is in your hands. Remember what you've undertaken.

MOPUS. I do, and instantly will I redeem my pledge. Be here again in a quarter of an hour. In the interim I'll speak to my wife.

MAT. If you fail us this time——

BOB. Don't fail us. (*Exeunt BOB, C., and MATILDA, R.*)

MOPUS. Fail you ? No ! The danger of the poor girl inspires me with an unwonted courage, and, Mrs. Mopus, for once will I teach you. (*going*) I may as well see what this letter is about. Ha ! 'tis from—— (*assuming a dancing attitude*) Um ! um ! “ Sorry, lament. I have wept, knelt, prayed to him, but in vain. The holder of the note you gave me is obdurate, his myrmidons——” Ha ! a poetical name for bum-bailiffs. “ His myrmidons are in quest of you ; so pray satisfy him without delay, and believe me.” Here is a pretty piece of business. Should this reach my wife's ears, mercy on mine ! What's to be done ? She alone can assist me ; but how shall I—— No matter ; to hesitate would be ruin, so not a moment must be lost. (*tap at door*) Bessy love ! how the devil shall I inform her ? and poor Royland, who imagines I am now pleading his cause for him. However, it cannot be helped. This cursed business will admit of no delay. The difficulty will be to prevail upon her to pay this, and at the same time to keep her in ignorance of the real creditor. Should she suspect—— (*dancing attitude*) She's coming ! if she should be but in good humour ! (*sings*)

“ Fly from the world, O Bessy, to me
You'll never——”

Enter MRS. MOPUS, D. L.

MRS. M. What, Alfred love, singing ? You seem in high spirits ! This is as I should wish always to find you.

MOPUS. And you, Bessy ? (*gives her chair ; she sits, R. C.*)

MRS. M. I was never in better spirits. Everything has succeeded to my desires. Sir Robert tells me that Matilda has consented.

MOPUS. I understand she has consented ; but now between ourselves——(*aside*) I'll follow Matilda's advice and try the effect of a little coaxing. (*aloud*) Why, Bessy dear, how charmingly you've done your hair to-day.

Mrs. M. Do you think so, Alfred? Take a chair, love, and sit by me.

Mopus. Gad, she's in such a charming good humour, I'd better begin with my own affairs first.

Mrs. M. Well, Alfred love, what between ourselves?

Mopus. We have been so tormented by visitors to-day we've scarcely had a moment's chat together. Ah, Bessy, if we had been deterred by the nonsensical gossip of the world——

Mrs. M. The gossip of the world has no influence on sensible minds; we married for our own happiness.

Mopus. Of course we did, and the object for which we united our fates how fully have we obtained. What a change in one's sentiments—in the very character, I may say—is operated by a happy marriage. In my youth, I was wild, thoughtless, extravagant; no one knows what money I squandered, what idle debts I contracted.

Mrs. M. There is *one* who knows something about them, Alfred.

Mopus. Ah! Bessy, had it been my fortunate lot to meet you a few years earlier, how many inconsiderate pranks, how many follies, incident to youth and inexperience, might have been spared me.

Mrs. M. Well, dear, those are long past; they are now forgotten like a feverish dream. Yet to say the truth, Alfred, if all your follies were recorded, they would fill a tolerably well sized volume.

Mopus. Now, suppose, love—merely suppose—I had yet matter remaining just sufficient to supply a slight appendix.

Mrs. M. How, sir!

Mopus. I mean nothing of recent date, but still forming part of the same interesting period of my biography.

Mrs. M. I don't understand you.

Mopus. As you have wittily observed, you know something about what my debts were, but suppose there were still remaining one, only *one*?

Mrs. M. You need not look to me for the means of discharging it. You have a liberal allowance from me, and from that you might have contrived——

Mopus. But, my love, I've not contrived—I've no contrivance.

Mrs. M. That is your own fault, sir.

Mopus. Very well, Mrs. Mopus; I won't reproach you, but I shall not soon forget this unkindness. (*turns from her*)

Mrs. M. Come, now, is it angry? Come, look at me, Alfred.

Mopus. (*aside*) I'll try the effect of a little firmness. (*aloud*)

No, madam, I shall say no more about it, but quietly await the arrival of the Myrmidons.

MRS. M. How! and are you in danger of—tell me, Alfred, what is the amount of the debt?

MOPUS. No, I shall say no more about a paltry matter of three hundred guineas. A prison is a very pleasant place, I daresay.

MRS. M. A prison! Say no more, Alfred (*quickly*), you shall have the money (*coaxingly*)—yes, you shall have the money. But don't it pout with its Bessy.

MOPUS. (*gives his hand*) There, then, there's no resisting you; you know your power.

MRS. M. And is this really the last of your debts?

MOPUS. Positively the last.

MRS. M. Now tell me who is your creditor, that I may at once—

MOPUS. No, don't ask me that, Bessy. Just give me the cheque and I'll run and—

MRS. M. I insist on knowing, or—

MOPUS. Well, since you are peremptory I will tell you. The creditor is—

MRS. M. Well, *quick*—who is he?

MOPUS. He's—why, dear, it is not exactly a *he*, love—

MRS. M. (*rises*) Not exactly a *he*! This is too much, and be the consequences what they may you shall not have a guinea.

MOPUS. Shan't I?

MRS. M. No, sir!

MOPUS. And is that positively your last word, madam?

MRS. M. Positively.

MOPUS. Very well, Mrs. Mopus; since love is obdurate, I must fly for relief to friendship. Ay, I have friends. I'm not destitute of resources. I am not so dependent upon you as you imagine. I must run down to the fellow and try to get him to give me a little time. (*rings bell*)

MRS. M. What are you ringing for?

MOPUS. To order my cab.

MRS. M. You shall not have it.

MOPUS. (*aside*) I may as well revel in a little independence. (*aloud*) Not have my cab, madam!

MRS. M. You shall not.

Enter JOHN, c.

MOPUS. John, my cab directly.

MRS. M. John, order it at your peril!

MOPUS. If he doesn't I'll break every bone in his body
(*kicks JOHN off, c.*)

MRS. M. Where do you want to go, sir?

MOPUS. It does not concern you to know, madam ; it's a matter of business, madam, and women have nothing to do with business.

MRS. M. Is it thus you answer me ? I desire you do not quit the house.

MOPUS. This tyranny is no longer to be endured. Not only I will quit the house, but hang me if ever I enter it again Jezebel !
(Exit, c.)

MRS. M. Oh, I shall expire—I am dying ! (*affects to faint and then starts up*) What ! and has he really gone ? Am I awake ? He who has hitherto been so docile, so submissive, to treat me thus ! Me (*rings bell violently*) who have ever been the tenderest of wives. (*rings*) The mildest, (*rings*) the most gentle—Will the wretches let me die here all alone ? (*enter SIMPKINS, C.L.*) So, Mrs. Minx, you are come at last ! Where is Mr. Mopus ? Is he gone out ?

SIM. Oh ! ma'am, don't ask me ! such a scene as it was !

MRS. M. What does the girl mean ? Speak !

SIM. Oh, ma'am, my master had scarcely passed the street door when two men, who had been a long time lurking about, tapped him on the shoulder, said something about *arrest*, and away they hurried him across the square.

MRS. M. Oh, my poor dear Alfred ! and 'tis my cruelty has occasioned this ! And I have no friend here to assist, to counsel me. Where is my intended son-in-law, Sir Robert ?

SIM. Below in the parlour, ma'am, but he can't move. The poor old gentleman saw the whole proceeding, and it gave him such a turn that he was seized with a fit of the cramp.

MRS. M. Will no one come to my assistance ?

Enter BOB, C., and MATILDA, B.

MAT. We are here, mamma.

BOB. Don't be alarmed, madam ; speak but the word and I will fly to the Antipodes to serve you. (*aside*) A lucky event for me so I will make the most of it.

MRS. M. Oh, sir, how shall I thank you ? You have heard of this dreadful occurrence ?

BOB. I was a witness to it. Poor Mopus ! as they hurried him away, tears of tenderness started in his eyes, and pressing my hand he exclaimed, "My Bessy is unkind, so welcome now my dungeon !"

MRS. M. A dungeon ! Pray accompany me, Mr. Royland ; my jewels, my last guinea—all shall be his.

BOB. Fortunately Sir Robert's carriage is at the door ; allow me to attend you and I'll answer for his instantaneous release.

MRS. M. You are a friend indeed, Mr. Royland ! Alfred ! your Bessy is coming to you.
(*Exeunt, c.*)

ACT DROP DESCENDS QUICKLY

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Enter BOB, leading in MOPUS, tipsy.*

MOPUS. (*sings*) “ Then, for this reason,
And for a season,
Let us be merry
Before we go.”

BOB. Hush ! hush ! they must not see you so merry.

MOPUS. Merry ! I have not been so merry for many a day. Master ! and doing the honours of my own table ! Lots of champagne ! Meetin' so many old acquaintances, and in that place, too, it was the “ form and cause conjoined.” Hang me if I should have relished their society half so well anywhere else ; it reminded me of former times.

BOB. Well I don't profess to be enchanted ; the sight of those iron bars——

MOPUS. Sink the iron bars ! They are not placed there to prevent a jolly set of fellows from getting out, man. They are the guardians of our social privacy, and hinder dull dogs from getting in. But I say, Bob, how go on your negotiations with Matilda ?

BOB. Ah ! don't talk of that ! But if I had not been more zealous in your service than I have found you in mine——

MOPUS. You don't know what I should have done for you, had it not been for this interruption. But, I say—Ha ! ha ! ha !—where is the Dragon of Wantley ?

BOB. The what ?

MOPUS. How did my wife take the news of my captivity ?

BOB. Shocked and grieved, as you may suppose. She drove with me to you ; but the sight of the bars, and the idea of your sufferings were too much for her nerves ; so she came home home again and left the care of your liberation to me, signed a blank cheque on her banker, and——

MOPUS. A blank cheque ! Give it to me ! I'll fill it up for a thousand. She never gave me a blank cheque in all her life.

BOB. Nonsense ! But come, get to your room, and put yourself to rights before you present yourself to the ladies.

MOPUS. Not a bit of it ! I'm ready to face the Dragon of Wantley—let her come on !

BOB. No, no ! Come, come ! I hear them ! (*drags him off,*
C. R.)

Enter MATILDA and SIMPKINS, D. R.

MAT. Come home alone, do you say?

SIM. Alone, miss, and crying, poor old lady, as if her heart would break.

MAT. Where then can Robert be? and poor Mr. Mopus?

SIM. Poor Mr. Mopus indeed! Poor Mrs. Mopus! Her fate should serve you as a warning, miss. You see what it is to marry a young man; but Sir Robert now, a respectable, well-behaved old gentleman——

MAT. Don't speak of him. I was beginning to think well of him, but since I've discovered the fatal mistake his very name is odious to me. What road, what road am I to take, Simpkins?

SIM. Why the high North road, as I told you before.

MAT. Simpkins! (*signals her to keep quiet*) Well, Robert! (*enter BOB, C. R.*) Where is Mr. Mopus?

BOB. He'll be here directly.

MAT. I am delighted at that, poor fellow! Imprisonment must be so dreadful; didn't you find him wretchedly dejected?

BOB. Don't remind me of it. But tell me, where's your mother?

SIM. She's waiting in great anxiety. Ah, here she is.

Enter MRS. MOPUS, D. L.

MRS. M. Where is he? Where is he? How is this, Mr. Royland? Haven't you brought my Alfred with you?

BOB. Why, ma'am. (*aside*) What the devil shall I say as an excuse? (*aloud*) I have not positively brought him with me; but he will not be long absent; there are certain little forms to go through on such occasions, and he is engaged in their fulfilment.

MRS. M. How can I thank you, sir? But pardon the inquiries of an anxious wife. Tell me, how did you find him?

MAT. Pray, mamma, don't ask! Mr. Royland can't bear to be reminded of it.

MRS. M. Poor Alfred! sad, gloomy, melancholy.

BOB. Ah, ma'am, you have seen the picture of Ugolino in his cell, or of Baron Trenk and his spider?

MRS. M. And I to be the cruel cause of this. (*loud knocking at D.*) Ha, 'tis he!

BOB. (*aside*) I shall be much astonished, then.

MRS. M. Matilda, my love, support me. (*crosses, C. L.*) Mr. Royland, he is restored to me! This poor heart of mine! Lead me into the drawing-room! no, remain here. I will

spare you the pain of witnessing so heartrending an interview as this must be. *(Exit, c.l.)*

BOB. Now that I am somewhat in favour with your mother, the moment this heartrending interview is concluded I'll boldly propose for you, and if she refuses her consent——

MAT. She will, she will!

BOB. If my rival were a young man our differences would speedily be settled; as it is—by-the-bye, what has become of him?

SIM. He's fast asleep in the dining-room, sir. I made him swallow a goblet full of peppermint for his cramp, and he has been snoring there ever since, sir. If he could be prevailed upon to reject Miss Matilda, the main difficulty would be removed.

MAT. Upon one point, Robert, I am resolved. Although I will marry no one without my mother's consent, no power on earth shall force me to marry Sir Robert. No, never!

BOB. Never!

SIM. Never!

Enter SIR ROBERT, c. d.

SIR R. Never! Never what, I wonder? Miss Matilda, I fear you will deem me a negligent wooer; but the truth is, I fell into a sound sleep, and had it not been for the loud knocking at the door just now——

MAT. I can't bear to look at him!

SIR R. But may I request an explanation of that "Never"?

MAT. Sir! I—ah——

(sighs, and exit, R.H.)

SIR R. Nothing can be more intelligible.

BOB. *(aside)* I'll leave the room, or I may lose my temper and forget myself.

SIR R. Mr. Royland, perhaps you could explain——

BOB. Sir! I!——

(sighs and exit, c.l.)

SIR R. Distinct and satisfactory in the highest degree. Oh, Mrs. Simpkins, I have had a specimen or two of your talent at reply. Pray, now, can you tell me what they meant by——

SIM. Sir! I—— *(sighs, and goes R.D. SIR ROBERT pulls her back)* And now, sir, if you betray the confidence we have reposed in you, you will be acting very unlike a gentleman.

SIR R. Considering the information I have received I don't know what I shall be acting like. If I do—But come, I must have a word with you. One of the sovereigns I gave you this morning was to bribe you to tell me the truth. Did you do so?

SIM. Tell the truth for a sovereign ! I'm ashamed of you, sir. Truth is a quality for which I entertain the deepest veneration. I should blush to set so light a value on it as a sovereign.

SIR R. Well, I believe it may be classed among the rare luxuries of life, and must be paid for accordingly. What, now, if I give you ten ? (*gives her ten-pound note*)

SIM. Ten pounds for the truth ? Well, sir, as you've already been a customer—guineas ! guineas ! guineas ! Luxuries are always paid for in guineas.

SIR R. (*takes out purse and gives half-sovereign*) Now, then, the truth—the absolute truth.

SIM. The very best I can afford you at the price.

SIR R. (*shaking his head*) You told me your young lady's heart was not engaged.

SIM. You need not shake your head, for that is true.

SIR R. Not engaged ?

SIM. No—I meant, not to you.

SIR R. Ah-m ! Who is that Mr. Royland ?

SIM. I know no more of him than you, sir ; he never was in this house till to-day.

SIR R. (*aside*) That's well again. (*aloud*) Yet he appears to be on—friendly terms with your young lady ?

SIM. That's natural enough, sir. When her aunt was living at Bath (*pointedly*) they were in the habit of meeting every day for a very considerable time.

SIR R. Oh ! then she is in love ?

SIM. You had better be explicit this time for fear of another misunderstanding. With whom do you mean ?

SIR R. Not myself !

SIM. Ahem !

SIR R. (*rather angrily*) Why then I must say this has been a very extraordinary proceeding on the part of your young lady. She positively consented to marry me ; exclaimed, "How happy this will make my dear Robert !"

SIM. 'Twas all a mistake, sir ; 'twasn't this Robert she meant. She thought you were speaking of the other Robert.

SIR R. Then the "other Robert" expects to marry her ?

SIM. How can he, sir, when it is settled by Mrs. Mopus that you are to be the happy swain ?

SIR R. Speak out, girl, or you'll make me angry. Matilda expects to marry him ?

SIM. She can't, sir— (*looks at him from top to toe*) At least not for these two or three years or so.

SIR R. What do you mean by "these two or three years or so" ?

SIM. Why, sir, though there is not a chance for her loving

you, I'm sure she would respect your *memory* too much to marry again within the *first* year of her widowhood.

SIR R. Go about your business, girl, and never let me hear your dismal voice again.

SIM. (*aside*) I hope I have given him truth enough for his money, and if now he be not the first to break the bargain with my mistress, he is a more silly old gentleman than I take him to be. (*Exit, R.*)

SIR R. I wish somebody were here to knock my stupid old head off my shoulders. I can't be satisfied with listening to agreeable falsehoods as other folks are, but I must pay my money to get at the disagreeable truth. Now, what ought I to do? I told all my acquaintances that I should bring home a young wife with me, and I shall be cruelly laughed at if I don't. (*going*) Yet, hold—widowhood is running in her head; we shall be living in a lone, country house, and who knows but on one of those long dark winter nights she may cut my throat or poison me? And there is that devil, Simpkins, ready to prepare the cup. No matter; I'm resolved I'll marry her, and take the risk of the consequences of my folly. (*Exit, D.L.*)

Enter MRS. MOPUS, C.

MRS. M. What can be the cause of this? At home nearly a quarter of an hour, and not yet come to me; doubtless, like me, he's overpowered by his feelings and waits till—(*MOPUS speaks without*)—Hush! I think I hear him! Yes, 'tis he! Let me compose myself for the trying scene.

Enter MOPUS, C.R., speaking.

MOPUS. I'll never forgive them—never forgive them, that's certain! Everyone in the house came to welcome my return, but Simpkins didn't—and Matilda didn't. Never forgive them!

MRS. M. Alfred, speak to me!

MOPUS. Ah, my dear—Bessy, my love, we meet again, and I'm happy—(*aside*)—happy, did I say? I'm afraid I'm very drunk.

MRS. M. Your joy at our re-union cannot equal mine.

MOPUS. It does, it does. Who would not be happy with such a wife? Such a wife! a blessing to me. I'm the happiest man in England. (*aside*) Yes, I must be very drunk.

MRS. M. Why, what ails him? His sufferings at that dreadful place have surely attested his head. Alfred, my love, be composed. You're at home with your Bessy. Here, take a seat.

MOPUS. No, I can stand very well. Now, Bessy, I'll appeal to you. They all came to welcome my return—from

the cook to the nursery-maid—no, we have no nursery-maid; yet Simpkins, who is the prettiest girl in the house—a devilish deal the prettiest girl—except Matilda——

MRS. M. How is this? He is delirious! Alfred, do you recollect in whose presence you are? Your wife——

MOPUS. My wife! A vital wife! She's too good a wife for me. I don't deserve her. I wish with all my heart she was some other man's wife. I don't think I'm so very drunk neither.

MRS. M. But tell me, Alfred; torn from me as you were, and thrown into a melancholy prison, you must have suffered much.

MOPUS. Torn from you! There was the blow! Suffered torments, to tures, martyrdom——

MRS. M. Poor dear!

MOPUS. Tortures——But I'll never forgive Simpkins.

MRS. M. But you must be fatigued, and need refreshments. Dinner has been delayed till your return, and now——

MOPUS. Dinner! Damn dinner, my darling! I've dined.

MRS. M. Dined! Impossible!

MOPUS. Oh, but I have, though; a devilishly deal better dinner than I should have got here.

MRS. M. Where could you have dined?

MOPUS. In the house of woe. In the house of sorrow and lamentation. Myself and a few other unhappy captives——

MRS. M. Why then this must be the effect of—— But no, he would not dare. Tell me, have you been drinking, sir?

MOPUS. Nothing but wine, Bessy. 'Pon my honour, Bessy, nothing but wine. Separated from you—from the best of wives—my thoughts, my mind——

MRS. M. Then in the midst of your troubles you thought of me, Alfred?

MOPUS. I did. So I was obliged to drink to drive away disagreeable recollections. Where is Simpkins? She shall make me some strong coffee, and then I'll forgive her.

MRS. M. Alfred!

MOPUS. Never mind me. You're the best of wives, so do you go to dinner. I'd join you at wine, to drink to the happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Royland.

MRS. M. Mr. and Mrs. who?

MOPUS. What, have I not told you? No, I didn't tell you. I remember now you were to be kept in the dark—that was settled. Keep the old one in the dark. But I've promised my friend Royland that he shall have her, and he *shall* have her.

MRS. M. Astonishment ! (*crosses, R.*)

MOPUS. Astonishment ! Not in the least. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Why you don't suppose I'd suffer my pretty Matilda to be sacrificed, my vanity would not let me. Ha ! ha ! ha ! couldn't think of being father-in-law to old Daddy Mellow-boy.

MRS. M. So, sir, the introduction of Mr. Royland here was a planned thing.

MOPUS. No matter for that. She shan't be sacrificed. Marry her grandfather !—they'll both be miserable. When a young man marries an old—no offence, my chicken—I mean, when a young woman marries an old man it can only be for the sake of his money—there can be no *love* in the case.

MRS. M. Do I dream ?

MOPUS. No, no ; you are wide awake enough. (*calls*) Simpkins, where's that girl ?

MRS. M. I desire——

MOPUS. Don't you *desire* anything till I have had some coffee. My friends tell me I ought to be master, and master I'll be ; 'tis capital advice. But you're a capital wife, and shan't be flurried. Don't hurry yourself—stay where you are.

Enter SIR ROBERT, D.L.

MOPUS. Ah, Sir Robert, you're a capital fellow, and we'll have some shooting together ; but you shan't marry Matilda—you shan't make a fool of yourself. At your age that would have been the wife for you, and a capital wife she is—never forgive myself for depriving you of the chance of such a wife. Ha, ha, ha ! Dragon of Wantley ! (*Exit, L.*)

SIR R. What's the cause of all this ? “Shan't marry Matilda—shan't make a fool of myself” !

MRS. M. Oh, Sir Robert, you see before you the most unhappy of women ! The monster, so to have deceived me ! I, who thought him so affectionate, so obedient ! I can hardly speak the words. He has dared to insult me—almost to avow—that marrying me—at my age—it was not from affection, but for my fortune alone. The hypocrite ! the hypocrite ! Sir Robert.

SIR R. Hypocrite ! If he really avowed that, madam, I must give him credit for being as plain-spoken a young gentleman as ever I had the honour of being acquainted with.

MRS. M. Even if he have stifled the voice of affection in his heart, ought he not at least to obey the dictates of gratitude !

SIR R. Ah, Mrs. Mopus, where nature has ordained that the bond of union shall be love, I fear that gratitude will prove but a frail and treacherous substitute. But did you not lately assure me that you were happy as the days were long? (*looks at his watch*) If that be your standard, I'll be hanged if Mr. Mopus has given you what I should call honest measure to-day.

MRS. M. Oh, sir, I never have been, never can be happy with him. When he is absent, I am uneasy, jealous; when present, his ill-concealed impatience of restraint tells me but too distinctly that his feeling is centred—not in me.

SIR R. I came to speak with you upon a very different subject; but you have drawn so flattering a picture of what may reasonably be expected from a marriage between parties whose ages are not exactly within a year or two of each other.

MRS. M. Yours is a very different case. Besides, sir, it seems we have been made the dupes of Mr. Mopus and this friend of his.

SIR R. So I had partly discovered.

MRS. M. But they shall not enjoy their imaginary triumph long—Matilda shall be yours! We have settled that point between ourselves, and Mr. Mopus shall yet see who is mistress.

MOPUS. (*without. L.*) Out of the house, rascal!

MRS. M. What do I hear?

Enter MOPUS.

MOPUS. Dare to tell me I'm not his master! Things have come to a pretty pass, upon my word,

MRS. M. (*C.*) Mr. Mopus, if you've not yet recovered your senses, you had better retire.

MOPUS. I am quite sober now—as sober as I ever wish to be. Some of Simpkins' good coffee has set me to rights, but I'll discharge every one of the scoundrels. I'll reform the whole establishment.

MRS. M. (*R.*) You forget, sir, you are in *my* house.

MOPUS. Your house, Bessy love? *My* house, *my* servants, *my* carriages, *my* fortune. The house is mine and everything in it—(*with a sigh*)—wife included.

MRS. M. Incredible insolence! Yours?

MOPUS. Mine! mine! mine! Till this hour the inventory of my wealth, like a magic writing, presented a mere blank. I have steeped it in champagne, and now every item of it is clear, apparent, legible, palpable, and may the devil encumber the property with ten wives more if I don't enjoy it.

MRS. M. Oh ! I shall faint ! (*is going to faint ; SIR ROBERT attempts to support her, MOPUS prevents him*)

MOPUS. You shan't ; 'tis the old resource I know, but henceforth I'll allow no fainting in my house ; so faint at your peril, for not a chair of mine shall you have to support you, not one of my servants shall dare come to your assistance. Ay, madam, *my* servants ! for I'll re-model the household, I'll have a fresh set ; not one of these shall remain here another day, not one of them—only Simpkins, for Simpkins is a pretty girl and makes good coffee.

SIR R. (*aside*) A promising example for me.

MRS. M. Ungrateful monster ! this, and at the very moment when I have restored you to liberty.

MOPUS. That's it, my dear, I'm shewing you that I know how to use it.

MRS. M. This may be very well, sir, but let me remind you that I am still mistress here.

MOPUS. You *shall* be mistress, my gentle Bessy ; you shall control the cook, govern the housemaids, and take the head of my table, whenever I give dinners to my old friends and associates, as I intend to do three times a week the season through. You shall be mistress but I'll be master. More than this no *good* wife should desire, nor more than *it* should any prudent husband grant

MRS. M. I can bear it no longer. Was it to place a tyrant near me I raised you from penury to riot in the sudden luxuries of wealth ? Nay, taught you the unknown comforts of a home ? Since I must speak, tell me, sir, but for my fortune, what had you now been ?

MOPUS. Fortune ! breathe but that word again, and may my name become a by-word and a jest, and my fate be remembered as a warning to every desperate and undone dandy, but I'll spend one-half the accursed, the dearly purchased fortune in obtaining a divorce and—ha, ha, ha !—I'll marry Simpkins with the other.

SIR R. (*at c.*) Mr. Mopus, madam, a thousand pardons for interfering. I've been an unwilling though an edified spectator of this scene, and I must say—

MOPUS. (*with mock gravity*) How is this, Sir Robert ? Is it to me you speak ? me, who am soon to be your father-in-law ? Tell me, young man, is this a specimen of the duty and veneration I am to expect from you ?

SIR R. Enjoy your jest, you are welcome to it ; 'tis better you should laugh at old Mellowboy to-day for the fool he might have been, than pity him to-morrow for the fool he would have been. My dear Mrs. Mopus, from what I have just witnessed I—I—I—

MRS. M. Well, sir?

SIR R. Why, ma'am, when I consented to enlist in the ranks of matrimony I had considered only the honours without calculating upon the dangers of the service; but, (*looking slyly at them*) since I have smelt powder, I own I do not feel much heart to mingle in the fray.

MRS. M. I understand you, sir. You refuse to marry my daughter?

MOPUS. Refuse her! to be sure he does; say the word, my venerable Nestor. Say it boldly, my Antediluvian! What could you expect from marrying a girl animated with the fire of nineteen?

SIR R. Little but the smoke, I fear.

MRS. M. Sir Robert is master of his own actions.

MOPUS. Of course he is; he's old enough, ain't you, Bobby?

MRS. M. But my daughter is **under** my control. She cannot marry without my consent.

MOPUS. Your consent, my pretty Bessy? what has your consent to do with the matter? I repeat that I am master over this house and everything in it. Royland and Matilda are in the house, ergo, I can dispose of them along with the other movables. (*enter BOB and MATILDA, C.*) Matilda, my dear, it's all settled; you're to be married at last.

MAT. Oh, mamma, and could you be so cruel?

SIR R. Don't be miserable, Miss Matilda, it is not me you are to make happy.

MRS. M. (*to BOB*) You have attempted to deceive me, sir, but the attempt shall not succeed. Should Matilda marry contrary to my wishes, she has nothing, not a penny, to expect.

BOB. (*R.*) I wouldn't give you twopence for your penny! Herself is the only treasure I have ever coveted. Do you, madam, sanction our union, and you make me rich beyond the wealth of worlds.

SIR R. Come, Mrs. Mopus, let me, his rival, intercede in their favour. I have a special interest in seeing them united—to that it will come one of these days—and I'd much rather the young gentleman should marry my bride than my widow.

MRS. M. I will not listen to it, sir.

SIR R. Now, consider. If after all I should make Matilda Lady Mellowboy, by the same act I should make you my mother, and I should hold myself bound in duty to call you mamma for the rest of my life.

MRS. M. Oh, the horrid idea! (*crosses to L.*)

MOPUS. (to BOB) You'll find this must be my work at last. Bessy, love, Bessy, let me, your Alfred——

MRS. M. Sir ! I——

MOPUS. Bessy dear— (*whispering, but in a determined tone*) consent, my darling, or I swear by the head of every Proctor in the Commons, I'll sue out a divorce to-morrow. Come, love, can you refuse your Alfred ?

MRS. M. Well, at your entreaty. Take her, Mr. Royland. (*crosses to c.*) Now, Alfred, let us quit London for ever.

MOPUS. No, not for ever, that would be folly. Why should we shun society ? As Mrs. Mopus with her husband, we have hitherto been the objects of its ridicule and pity ; let us henceforth learn to respect each other, and Mr. Mopus and his wife may claim their due share of respect from the world.

MRS. M. I perceive my error, and acknowledge it. The wife who is in any way accessory to her husband's degradation forfeits her own claim to respect—her own best hope of happiness.

MOPUS.

I'm hardly sober enough just now, I fear,
To play the moralist before you here,
But every Play a moral's bound to show,
And what ours is I'm going to let you know.
Marriage no doubt's a charming institution
Good for the morals and—the constitution ;
It's highly proper, even useful too,
Looking at it from a certain point of view ;
And he who weds for love, 'tis said (in mirth),
Provides himself a Paradise on earth.
Whether that's so or not I wouldn't swear,
My own opinion's neither here nor there ;
But this I'll say : That I'd advise all here
From my sad fate to take a warning clear ;
For though the man who weds for love be carried
Straight into Paradise as soon as married,
Depend upon it there's no milk and honey
For the mean wretch who only weds for money.

CURTAIN.



PROSCENIUM AND DROP SCENE.

PROSCENIUM.—A most effective Proscenium can be formed by utilizing the paper made for this purpose. Three pieces of wood are merely required, shaped according to this design, and covered with the paper; the proscenium having the appearance of light blue puffed satin panels, in gold frames, with Shakespeare medallion in the centre.

Puffed satin paper, Light Blue, size 20 inches by 30 inches, per sheet, 25 cts.

Imitation Gold Bordering, per sheet, 25c., making 14 feet.

Shakespearian Medallion, 18 inches in diameter, 50 cts.

DROP SCENE.—The picture shown above is an illustration of this scene. It comprises four sheets of paper which are to be pasted in the centre of any sized canvas that may be requisite for the drop curtain. Size $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 5 feet. Price \$2.50.

DOORS.—These comprise three sheets of paper each, and can be had either for drawing-room or cottage purposes. Size, 7 feet by 3 feet. Price, complete, \$1.25 each.

WINDOW.—This is a parlor window formed with two sheets of paper, and could be made practicable to slide up and down. The introduction of curtains each side would make it very effective. Size, 3 feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Price, \$1.00, complete.

FRENCH WINDOW.—Consisting of four sheets of paper, representing a window containing four large ornamental frosted glass panes with colored glass around. Size $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet high by 5 feet. Price \$1.50.

FIREPLACE.—This is also made with two sheets of paper. The fire is lighted, but should this not be required a fire-paper can be hung over it. It will be found most useful in many farces wherein a character has to climb up a chimney, and many plays where a fireplace is indispensable. By purchasing a door, window, and fireplace an ordinary room scene could easily be constructed with the addition of some wall-paper. Size, 3 feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Price, complete, \$1.25.

FRENCH'S ACTING EDITIONS,

PRICE, 15cts. EACH.

NEW PLAYS.

April Folly	Gretchen	Playmates
At Sixes and Sevens	Harvest Home	Prompter's Box
Barbara	His Own Guest	Postscript
Baron's Wager	Hook and Eye	Progress
Betsy	In Honor Bound	Punch
Bow Bells	Iron Master (The)	Ruined by Drink
Breach of Promise	Lady Fortune	Railway Adventure
Breaking the Ice	Linked by Love	Row in the House
Brothers (The)	Long Odds	Sample vs. Pattern
Bubbles	Love Game	Saved
By Special Request	Lyrical Lover	Second Thoughts
Case for Eviction	Major and Minor	Senior Wrangles
Chalk and Cheese	Man Proposes (Grundy)	Sins of the Fathers
Charity	Marble Arch	Sixpenny Telegram
Circumstances Alter Cases	Melting Moments	Sour Grapes
Confederate Spy	Merry Meeting	Spur of the Moment
Compromising Case	Mariner's Return	Steeple Jack
Crazed	Miser	Step Sister
Crossed Love	Month After Date	Sunny Side
Danicheffs	My Friend Jarlet	Sunset
Diminy's Dilemma	My Little Girl	Sunshine
Dreams	My Lord in Livery	Taken by Storm
Duchess of Bayswater & Co	Nearly Seven	Tears; Idle Tears
Duty	Nearly Severed	That Dreadful Doctor
Engaged	Nettle	The Nightingale
Equals	Not Such a Fool, etc.	Thorough Base
False Shame	Obliging His Landlady	Through the Fire
Fennel	Off Duty	Tom Pinch
First Mate	Old Cronies	True Colors
For the Old Love's Sake	On the Brink	Two Pros
Garden Party	Once Again	Which
Garrick (Muskerry)	Once a Week	Why Women Weep
George Geith	Open Gate	Woman's Wrongs
Gentle Gertrude Buil	Overland Route	Written in Sand
Girl Graduate	Palmistry	Yellow Roses
Girls (The)	Petticoat Perfidy	Yeoman's Service
Glimpse of Paradise	Pity	

GUIDE TO SELECTING PLAYS;

Price 25 Cents.

Showing how to select Farces, Comedies, Dramas, for Private or Public Performance; giving the Number of Characters, the Author's Name, the Scenery, Costumes, Time in Representation, and the Plot or Advice, connected with 1,500 Pieces.

FRENCH'S PARLOR COMEDIES.

A new series of selected plays for Amateurs. Ten numbers.

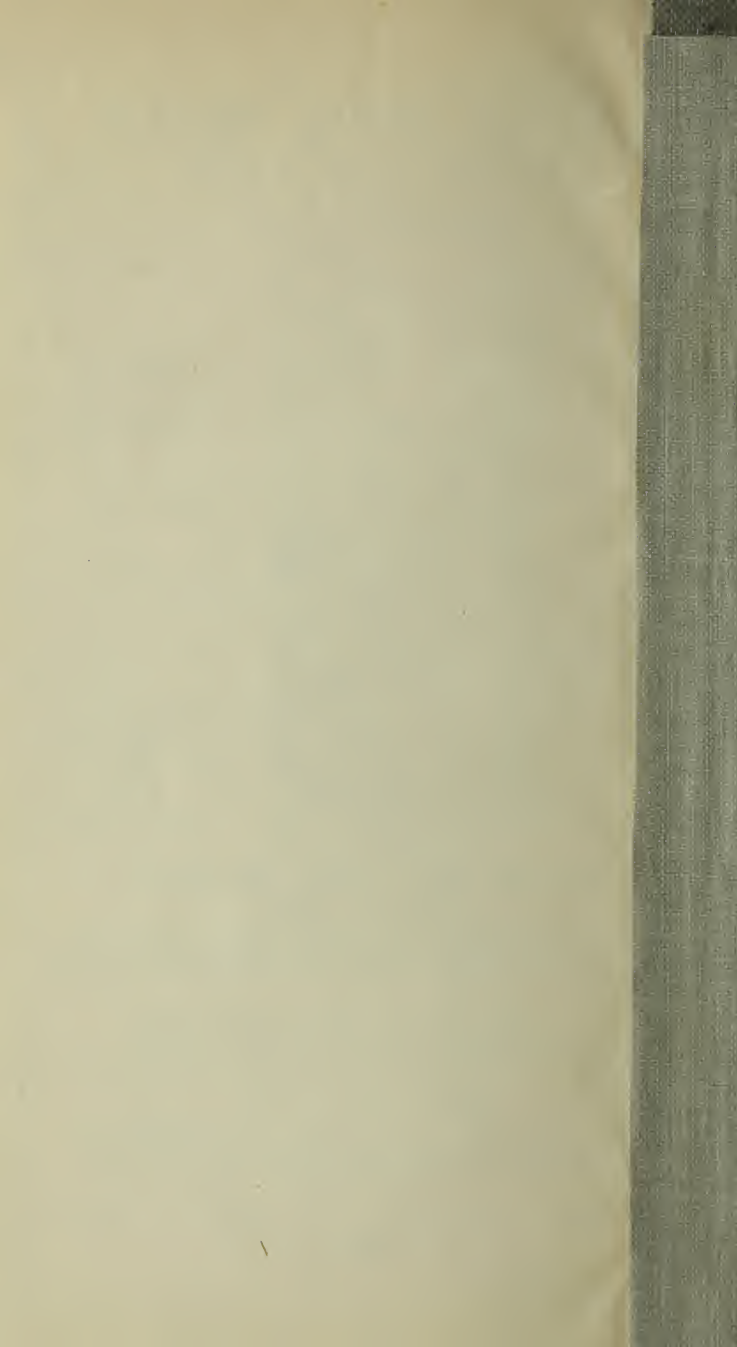
Price, 15 Cents each.

Guide to Selecting Plays. Hints on Costume. Scenery to Fit any Stage.
Jarley's Wax Works, Ethioplian Plays, Charades, Amateur's Guide,
Guide to the Stage.

NEW CATALOGUE SENT FREE.

T. H. FRENCH!

28 West 23d St., New York.



PRESERVATION REVIEW

4/05 _____

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 047359416